

Message Text

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NODIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PFOR, IR, UR

SUBJ: IRAN AND USSR

REF: (A) TEHRAN 3926, (B) TEHRAN 5153

1. DURING AUDIENCE ON JULY 6, SHAH AND I COVERED VARIETY OF TOPICS, BUT ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT WAS A DISCUSSION OF THE SOVIET UNION'S ATTITUDE TOWARD IRAN AS PERCEIVED HERE. I HAVE MADE THIS MESSAGE NODIS, BECAUSE I WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR DECIDING, IN VIEW OF THE SENSITIVITIES HEREIN, WHAT DISTRIBUTION IT SHOULD HAVE OUTSIDE THE DEPARTMENT.

2. OUR CONVERSATION STARTED OFF BY THE SHAH TENDING TO AGREE THAT THE RUSSIAN DESIRE FOR CASH PAYMENT ON A JORDANIAN AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM DID INDEED COME FROM THE FACT THAT THE SOVIETS ARE HAVING FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES. HE NOTED THAT THEY ARE NOT ONLY IN SERIOUS TROUBLE WITH THEIR AGRICULTURE BUT ALSO WITH SIGNIFICANT ABSENTEEISM AND SLOWDOWNS IN FACTORIES PRODUCING FOR THE CIVILIAN SECTOR.

3. AT THIS POINT THE SHAH TOOK UP IRAN'S RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION. HE POINTED OUT THAT REASONABLY GOOD WORKING RELATIONSHIPS HAD TENDED TO TURN SOUR AS SOON AS IT BECAME EVIDENT TO THE SOVIETS THAT IRAN NOT ONLY INTENDED TO BE INDEPENDENT IN NAME BUT INDEPENDENT WITH

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A STRONG CONVENTIONAL MILITARY FORCE TO BACK IT UP. HE

SAID HE HAD PASSED THE WORD THROUGH VARIOUS CHANNELS TO THE SOVIETS THAT IRAN INTENDED AS SOON AS IT COULD TO BECOME A POWER TO BE RECKONED WITH INDUSTRIALLY AND MILITARILY. THIS IN TURN LED HIM TO MAKE A BRIEF REFERENCE TO SOVIET PROPAGANDA AGAINST IRAN(E.G., REFTTEL(A) AND FBIS ITEM FROM MOSCOW RADIO PEACE AND PROGRESS 1630 GMT 25 JUNE 76). THE SHAH THEN ADVERTED TO THE FACT THAT AT THE COMMUNIST PARTY CONGRESS IN MOSCOW EARLY THIS YEAR BREZHNEV, IN HIS MAJOR ADDRESS, FAILED FOR THE FIRST TIME TO MENTION IRAN WHEN HE DISCUSSED THE NEIGHBORING STATES OF THE SOVIET UNION. PREVIOUSLY, BREZHNEV HAD HAD KIND WORDS TO SAY FOR ITS RELATIONS WITH AFGHANISTAN, FINLAND, AND IRAN. INDICATING THAT HE HAD MADE HIS DISPLEASURE FELT THROUGH VARIOUS CHANNELS, THE SHAH WAS THEREFORE INTERESTED TO NOTE THAT AT THE RECENT INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST PARTY CONFERENCE IN EAST BERLIN, BREZHNEV HAD TALKED QUITE A BIT ABOUT IRAN AND HAD EMPHASIZED THE FAVORABLE ASPECTS OF THEIR WORKING RELATIONSHIP SUCH AS THE SOVIET STEEL MILL IN ISFAHAN, THE TRILATERAL GAS DEAL, AND ARAK MACHINE TOOL PLANT. HE ALSO INDICATED THAT THE TWO COUNTRIES HAVE SHOWN THAT THEY CAN COOPERATE WELL DESPITE HAVING DIFFERENT POLITICAL SYSTEMS. THE SHAH REACTED TO THIS FAVORABLE STATEMENT BY SAYING THAT THERE CAN BE ONLY EXPLANATION FOR ITS HAVING BEEN MADE: THE SOVIETS WANT TO LULL IRAN INTO DROPPING ITS GUARD AND POSSIBLY REDUCING ITS PURCHASES OF ARMS FROM THE UNITED STATES. THE SHAH'S ATTITUDE CAN BE SUMMARIZED IN THE STATEMENT THAT HE AUTHORIZED THE 16 YEAR OLD CROWN PRINCE ON HIS CURRENT VISIT TO THE SOVIET UNION TO INFORM ANY SOVIET OFFICIAL WHO RAISED THE SUBJECT THAT IRAN STILL INTENDED TO BECOME A STRONG POWER MILITARILY AND INDUSTRIALLY.

4. THE SHAH TURNED TO HIS OFT-REPEATED COMMENTS ABOUT THE NEED FOR STRONG AMERICAN LEADERSHIP FO THE FREE WORLD. HE POINTED OUT THAT IN HIS BICENTENNIAL MESSAGE PUBLISHED IN TIME MAGAZINE THE STATEMENT HE REAGREDE AS THE MOST IMPORTANT WAS THE ONE IN WHICH HE MADE THE POINT THAT"THE UNIVTED STATES DOES NOT BELING TO HERSELF ALONE." HE AGREED THAT PRESIDENT FORD UNDERSTANDS THIS

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BUT QUERIED RHETORICALLY WHETHER GOVERNOR CARTER DOES.

5. THE CONVERSATION THEN TURNED TO TERRORISM IN IRAN. I MADE THE POINT THAT I WAS IMPRESSED WITH THE PROFESSIONALISM AND DISCIPLINE OF IRANIAN TERRORISTS AS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE KILLINGS OF THE AMERICAN COLONELS AS WELL AS IN THE NUMBER OSUICIDES WHICH HAD TAKEN PLACE DURING POLICE OPERATIONS IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS. I NOTED

THAT NO DIRECT EVIDENCE HAD BEEN PRODUCED LINKING THE TERRORISTS TO A SPECIFIC FOREIGN POWER EVEN THOUGH THEY APPEAR TO HAVE PLENTIFUL FUNDS, ARMS, AND TRADECRAFT TRAINING. THE SHAH REPLIED IN A LOWER VOICE BUT WITH TOTAL SOBRIETY, QUOTE THEY ARE BACKED BY THE SOVIET UNION. WHAT OTHER COUNTRY COULD PROVIDE SUCH SUPPORT? AND WHAT OTHER COUNTRY WOULD PROFIT FROM KILLING MY PEOPLE IN COLD BLOOD? THE LIBYANS WOULD HAVE NOTHING TO GAIN. AS FOR IRAQ, ITS LEADERS MIGHT LIKE TO GET RID OF ME BUT ITS SECURITY SERVICE IS TOO PREOCCUPIED WITH INTERNAL PROBLEMS TO BE CAPABLE OF HANDLING THESE OPERATIONS INSIDE IRAN. THE PALESTINIANS WOULD NOT ONLY HAVE NOTHING TO GAIN BUT WOULD ALIENATE A MUSLIM COUNTRY WHICH MIGHT SUPPORT THEIR CAUSE. WHO ELSE IS THERE? END QUOTE CLUTCHING HIS FISTS TO HIS CHEST AND TENSING FOR A MOMENT, THE SHAH WENT ON TO SAY, QUOTE I HAVE FELT THIS RUSSIAN PRESSURE VERY STRONGLY. THE SOVIETS DO NOT WANT IRAN TO GAIN IN STRENGTH. EVERY ONE OF THE TERRORISTS WHOM WE HAVE ARRESTED OVER THE YEARS IS A MARXIST. WHILE PREACHING COEXISTENCE AND DETENTE, THE SOVIETS WORK CLANDESTINELY ON ANOTHER LEVEL AND ARE DETERMINED TO UNDERMINE MY GOVERNMENT. THEY DO NOT WANT TO SPEAK ANY STRONG NATIONS ON THEIR BORDERS. THEY REGARD THE PRC AS ENOUGH OF A PROBLEM FOR THEM. I REPEAT TO YOU WHAT I HAVE SAID BEFORE: 'UNTIL THE SOVIET UNION PUBLICLY AND OFFICIALLY DISAVOWS ITS INTENTION TO SPREAD MARXISM-LENINISM THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, I BELIEVE IT WILL PURSUE ITS OBJECTIVES ON A CONTINUING BASIS WITH EVERY FORCE AT ITS COMMAND.' END QUOTE.

6. COMMENT: FROM THE VANTAGE POINT OF MY BACKGROUND I WOULD BE HARD PUT TO CAVIL WITH THE SHAH'S ANALYSIS OF HIS TERRORIST PROBLEM. THE EVIDENCE WHICH HAS BEEN PRO-SECRET

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DUCED THROUGH THE KILLING AND ARREST OF TERRORISTS IN VARIOUS PARTS OF IRAN TENDS TO CONVINCE ONE THAT THESE PEOPLE ARE NOT ONLY HIGHLY TRAINED BUT MOTIVATED TO THE POINT OF IMMEDIATELY COMMITTING SUICIDE TO AVOID ARREST. THEIR BEHAVIOR, THEIR PATTERN OF ORGANIZATION, AND THE OPERATIONS THEY MOUNT ARE NOT THE PRODUCT OF ANY MINOR LEAGUE COUNTRY OF INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION. THEIR TRAINING IS CERTAINLY NOT INDIGENOUS.
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